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INFO RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN PRIORITY 0104
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 9755
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 6693
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 4759
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 3428
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 0443
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 3520
RUEHRK/AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK PRIORITY 0018
RUEHSM/AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM PRIORITY 0507
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 2600
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 7257
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 5021
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 1668
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 000036

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DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/09/2017

TAGS: [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: SRI LANKAN MONITORING MISSION ADAPTING TO RESUMED
ARMED CONFLICT

Classified By: AMBASSADOR ROBERT O. BLAKE, JR. REASONS: 1.4 (B, D)

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: SLMM head of mission Lars Solvberg briefed Co-Chair Ambassadors and new Indian Ambassador to Sri Lanka Alok Prasad on January 8 regarding SLMM plans to reconfigure the mission. Because of their limited numbers and various constraints on their operations, but especially because of security threats, the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission is re-inventing itself. Solvberg noted the SLMM is no longer monitoring a ceasefire but a de facto armed conflict; risks to SLMM personnel have risen accordingly. SLMM will maintain a HQ in Colombo and a liaison office in Kilinochchi, but has pulled back staff from district offices in the North and East. The SLMM has created two rapid-response teams available 24/7 to scramble to sites of reported ceasefire violations. The SLMM is consulting with both parties to the conflict on how to make its activities more relevant and plans to approach Co-Chairs and India on closer cooperation in the future. End summary.

12. (SBU) In the absence of the Ambassador, who was in Kandy, Pol Chief attended a Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) briefing for Co-Chairs, which incoming Indian high Commissioner Alok Prasad and his DCM also joined. SLMM head of mission (HOM) Lars Solvberg told Co-Chair Ambassadors that the SLMM was "repositioning" itself in January 2007 in response to heightened security risks monitors faced. He pointed out that the assumptions the mission was based on were no longer valid. While the Cease-Fire Agreement (CFA) posited a relatively peaceful, permissive environment, the resumption of hostilities meant that "we are no longer monitoring a ceasefire, but a de facto armed conflict."

13. (C) The SLMM was also rethinking its media strategy,

Solvberg said. The unfavorable image the mission had in much of the Sri Lankan press was not conducive to performing its functions and added to the security risks monitors face. Aside from the risk of monitors simply "being in the wrong place at the wrong time," Solvberg said, the mission itself, and even some individual monitors, had received threats it would be imprudent to ignore.

¶4. (C) Because of the withdrawal of monitors from EU member states, the SLMM was at half its previous strength, Solvberg noted. However, the mission had the prerogative according to paragraph 3 of the CFA to organize itself, he said. The mission had therefore withdrawn international personnel from the district offices in the north and east for a retreat held at a hotel near the international airport. The outcome of their reflection, Solvberg explained, was that the SLMM could not longer maintain a permanent presence at the district offices, primarily for security reasons. Instead, the mission would reinvent itself as a more fluid and reactive organization. The headquarters in Colombo and a liaison office to the LTTE in Kilinochchi would remain, but there would be no permanent manning of district offices. Instead, the mission would set up two rapid-reaction teams ready to respond on a 24-hour basis to reports of violations. Solvberg added that the SLMM might find it useful to establish another base of operations in north central Sri Lanka.

¶5. (C) Solvberg said that the SLMM was consulting with both the warring parties to redesign "more relevant outputs." The SLMM also wanted to work more intensively with the Co-Chairs

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and other friendly countries such as India. He would approach us soon with proposals on how to cooperate more closely in the future.

¶6. (SBU) The SLMM reacted both to recent Sri Lankan Air Force strikes against LTTE targets and to the recent spate of bus bombings by sending investigators and posting the findings on the SLMM website. The SLMM issued press statements deploring the targeting of civilians and urging both parties to observe their obligations under the CFA to spare the civilian population. However, it refrained from assigning blame to the LTTE as the likely perpetrator of the bus bombings, presumably for lack of clear proof.

¶7. (C) COMMENT: The SLMM continues to play an indispensable role in sorting out fact from fiction on the ground. There is no other authority we trust for impartial assessments of the realities regarding the numerous acts of violence. It has recently distanced itself from its previous approach of "ruling" against one of the warring parties. It is now investigating incidents that are not part of a more-or-less conventional armed conflict, but include acts of terrorism. Perhaps this is what Solvberg meant by becoming more "relevant." It is hard to see how the mission will be able to operate effectively without having a forward base of operations closer to the main theaters of hostilities in the north and east. Still, the strategy of avoiding a static presence that could present a clear target is probably a wise one. Embassy will follow up on the SLMM's request for closer cooperation, especially any requests for U.S. assistance.

BLAKE